

Berkshire Hills
Music & Dance Association

presents

HANDEL & HAYDN SOCIETY ORCHESTRA

Christopher Hogwood
Artistic Director

Robert Levin
Fortepianist

— ALL MOZART —
PROGRAM

Symphony 1, in E flat, K.16

Allegro molto

Andante

Presto

Piano Concerto in D minor, K. 466

Allegro

Romanza

Rondo - Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Symphony 41, in C major - "Jupiter" - K. 551

Allegro vivace

Andante cantabile

Menuetto - Allegretto

Molto allegro

Walker Auditorium • The Hotchkiss School • Lakeville, Connecticut

October 12, 1990 - 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM NOTES

by Steven Ledbetter

The symphony was still in its adolescence when Mozart was born - a rather headstrong adolescence at that. It had as yet no fixed place in the musical hierarchy. It might be an opera overture heard in the theater, or played in church, or even heard as chamber music in the private home of a wealthy patron. The symphony might have three movements or four, arranged in many possible patterns.

Only gradually did the genre assume a reasonably fixed shape, settling into a pattern of four movements of which the second was usually slow and the third was usually in a dance pattern, almost always a minuet, while the first movement was the most elaborate and the last usually the liveliest. Eventually the symphony moved out of the opera house, out of the church, out of private homes, and settled in the concert hall, where a paying audience came to hear a performance. The symphony came to be regarded as the highest level to which abstract music could aspire.

That transition occurred gradually, and it was still going on during Mozart's brief lifetime. As a child in Salzburg he had plenty of opportunity to hear the kinds of symphonies being produced around him in Italy, Vienna, and southern Germany. His early travels extended his knowledge of the musical world to France, England, and Holland. Few composers of his day had so much opportunity to experience the full range of contemporary music-making, and none could absorb the styles as he did and transform the raw material thus assembled all over Europe into his own language.

Symphony No. 1 in E-flat, K. 16

We know from a recollection by Wolfgang's sister Nannerl that he wrote his first symphony in August 1764, on the outskirts of London, while their father Leopold was dangerously ill with a throat infection. To pass the time, young Wolfgang composed his "first symphony with all the instruments of the orchestra," while Nannerl helped him copy it, and he commented to her, "Remind me to give the horn something worthwhile to do!"

The symphony known as "No. 1" was composed in London in 1764, but it seems to be a different work, probably written a few months later, after Leopold's recovery and the family's move into London. Though it is far shorter and simpler than the Jupiter Symphony, it is nonetheless an astonishing achievement for a first essay in the medium, even overlooking the fact that the composer was only eight years old! Already Mozart had learned from his contemporaries in England, Johann Christian Bach and Carl Friedrich Abel, how to write for the orchestra, to make the grand gesture, dynamic contrasts, different types of themes, and so on. The opening movement offers a compact sonata form of considerable energy. The slow movement, in the relative minor, is short and direct. The finale is the first of many delicious dancing rondos that cap off the work with a smile.

Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466

Mozart completed the score of the D-minor concerto on February 10, 1785, and played the first performance the next day. Leopold, visiting in Vienna, wrote to Nannerl about her brother's recent success:

[I heard] a new and excellent piano concerto by Wolfgang, where the copyist was still at work when we arrived, and your brother didn't even have time to play through the rondo because he had to supervise the copying operation.

At this time Mozart's popularity in Vienna was reaching its short-lived crest. In 1784 he gave twenty-two concerts in thirty-eight days. "I don't think," he wrote home, "that in this way I can possibly get out of practice." Mozart was a practical genius: he wrote music because someone wanted to buy it or would pay to hear it. Public interest in Mozart as a pianist induced him to create piano concertos -- eleven of them between February 1784 and March 1786 -- so that he could appear as both composer and soloist, thus assuring his central role in the event. But even more astonishing than the number of concertos is their expressive range and technical variety, offering just about every possible variant on the relationship between piano and orchestra.

The minor key recommended this work to romantic pianists; it was one of the very few Mozart compositions to be performed with any frequency during the 19th century, and it made a powerful impression on Beethoven, who composed two superb cadenzas for it.

The concerto opens with a grandly romantic atmospheric gesture: throbbing syncopations, agitated rhythms, grumbling in the bass to mark the downbeat, no identifiable theme. The orchestra develops motifs of poignant sighs and laments leading to the protagonist's arrival. Piano and orchestra converse seriously yet wittily at the same time, each commenting on and attempting to outdo the other in persuasion technique. The movement ends not in triumph, but in mystery.

The Romanza is filled with lyric song, though a brief stormy interlude in the minor mode recalls something of the character of the first movement. The finale returns to D minor for its rondo theme, and it recalls the storms of the beginning but increasingly with witty equivocation, as if trying to decide whether to end in the major or the minor mode. A charming theme in the winds is first heard in F major; later it wants to be taken seriously in D minor, but somehow elements of the major scale keep creeping in, and by the end of the movement, at the conclusion of the cadenza, the tune frankly revels in D major as it brings the stormy concerto to a bright conclusion.

Symphony No. 41 in C, K. 551, Jupiter

Few feats of compositional fluency are as impressive as Mozart's in composing his last three symphonies during a little more than six weeks in the summer of 1788. Aside from

this exceptional speed, the three works cover an extraordinary range of mood and character.

By June 1788 Mozart had entered on a long decline of his fortunes that had only begun to turn itself around at the time of his death three-and-a-half years later. Gone were the heady days of 1784. Quite aside from his own tendency to spend money faster than he earned it, a downturn in the economy kept many potential patrons from offering commissions. Mozart was forced repeatedly to write to his friend and fellow Mason, Michael Puchberg, requesting loans.

How astonishing to realize that in these dire straits he composed three symphonies! He must have had expectations of a performance; it is hardly likely that he would have written something so "impractical" if he didn't have some hope of using them to support his family. Evidently he expected to introduce the three symphonies in a series of subscription concerts, but -- as far as we know -- the concerts never took place.

The festive formality of Symphony No. 41, completed on August 10, 1788, is as different as can be imagined from the preceding G-minor symphony, K. 550. The nickname Jupiter was not attached to this piece until after Mozart's death (no one seems to know where it came from). Like many inauthentic nicknames for musical compositions, it sticks mainly because it is convenient.

Mozart begins with two brief, strikingly contrasted ideas: a fanfare for the full orchestra followed immediately by a soft lyrical phrase in the strings, two ideas that seem to come from different musical worlds, but Mozart soon links them by adding a single counterpoint for flute and oboes. After a stormy passage for full orchestra, the skies clear again and Mozart offers a whistleable little tune borrowed from an aria he had composed the preceding May (K.541).

The second movement, calm and serene at the outset, becomes agitated as it moves from F major to C minor and introduces a figure that seems to change the meter from 3/4 to 2/4; when the thematic material returns, it is decorated in a highly ornate way. The passing chromatic notes so evident throughout the last two symphonies lend a slightly pensive air to the minuet of this one as well.

The finale is the most famous, most often studied, and most astonishing movement in the work. Mozart forms his themes out of contrapuntal thematic ideas of venerable antiquity ideas that can and do combine with one another in an incredible variety of ways. These he lays out in the normal sonata-form pattern. It sounds rather straightforward at first, but gradually we realize that this is going to be a technical showpiece. At the beginning of the development we hear some of the themes not only in their original form but also upside down. New arrangements of the material appear in the recapitulation, but nothing prepares us for the sheer tour de force of the coda, when Mozart brings all of the thematic ideas together in a single contrapuntal unity. These closing pages of Mozart's last symphony display the very epitome of contrapuntal skill employed in the service of a musical climax. Here, as so often with Mozart's music, we can only feel: everything fits; the world is in tune.

HANDEL & HAYDN SOCIETY PERIOD ORCHESTRA

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Linda Quan, principal second
Daniel Banner
Mark Beaulieu
Kinloch Earle
Judith Eissenberg
Clayton Hoener
James Johnston
Julie Leven
Danielle Maddon
Judith Shapiro
Katharyn Shaw
Jane Starkman
Lean Wong

VIOLA

David Miller, principal
Laura Jeppesen
Emily Bruell
Barbara Wright

CELLO

Karen Kaderavek, principal
Alice Robbins
Jan Pfeiffer

BASS

Michael Willens, principal
Thomas Coleman
Anne Trout

FLUTE

Christopher Krueger

OBOE

Stephen Hammer, principal
Marc Schachman

BASSOON

Andrew Schwartz, principal
Judith Bedford

HORN

Lowell Greer, principal
R. J. Kelley

TRUMPET

Dennis Alves, principal
Jesse Levine

TIMPANI

John Grimes

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* as of September 24, 1990

We are pleased to announce that The Hotchkiss School is again joining BHMDA in sponsoring the special student matinee performance for the elementary school students of District 1 on Friday March 15, 1991 when Boston Ballet II will perform "Rumpelstiltskin."